

Talking Points

Press conference on Governor's Recovery Expo

August 11, 2006

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NOTE: This is a multi-purpose news conference:

1. Officially open Governor's Recovery Expo
2. Announce launch of Working Your Way Back Home initiative
3. Announce that HUD has approved ratepayers mitigation plan and wind pool mitigation plan.

We gather here today nearly a year after the worst natural disaster in American history visited these shores and then took its wrath inland for more than 150 miles.

From these fields of destruction have come the seeds of an extraordinary opportunity to rebuild.

The vendors who are set up on the floor of the Coliseum are a good illustration of how much interest there is world-wide in helping Mississippi rebuild.

I welcome them and you to the Governor's Recovery Expo.

The Expo has several purposes:

First, it's an opportunity for families, businesses, builders, non-profits, state and federal agencies, and local government officials to come together and learn about the tools for rebuilding our coast.

It provides individuals and families with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about rebuilding their homes and communities safer than they were before Katrina, while being better prepared for future hurricanes.

The Expo brings federal, state and local partners together to discuss policies and programs, including how funding can be more rapidly delivered to citizens and communities.

I hope it will help builders become more familiar with existing recovery policies and sources of funding, and connect builders, developers and other private sector interests with local government officials and their plans for recovery.

Among the more than 150 booths, displays and demonstrations you will find information on such topics as:

- Methods for rebuilding safer and stronger homes
- State building codes
- Available financial assistance for housing and business recovery
- How to repair historic properties

I am particularly excited about going through the model housing that is out on the Coliseum's northwest parking lot.

These models include modular, manufactured, concrete, panelized, steel frame construction

Additional Expo activities include:

- Coastal evacuation plans and procedures
- Homeowner disaster preparedness tips
- Seminars about retrofitting houses, hazard mitigation, best construction practices, etc.)
- Business Recovery – Recovery information for businesses, including access to local lending institutions
- Nonprofit Assistance – Volunteer agencies on hand to interact with disaster victims.
- Financial Resources – Lending institutions along with non-profit financial resources
- Employment Services – WIN Job Center will have a mobile unit on site

As we officially open the Governor's Recovery Expo I have two other announcements to make:

First, is the launch of the “Working Your Way Back Home” initiative, a partnership among the state, the U.S. Department of Labor and Manpower Inc.

- The initiative will enable Mississippi’s displaced evacuees to return home to their communities, their families and their way of life.
- It offers evacuees who were displaced 151 miles from their home help in finding employment or getting the training and skills they need to get a job. It reimburses them for the cost of relocating.
- Mississippi is the first state to offer the program, and will serve as a model for other states impacted by Hurricane Katrina.
- It’s funded by the Department of Labor and the Mississippi Department of Employment Security is the lead agency. The program is available through the network of WIN Job Centers across the state.
- A press release we’ll hand out in a few minutes has other details.

I want to give special recognition to the folks who have made this happen: Guests at Governor’s Announcement about Working Your Way Back Home

- Dr. Helen Parker, Regional Administrator, Department of Labor, from Atlanta
- Tommye Dale Favre, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security
- Melanie Holmes, Manpower Vice President-Corporate Affairs, North America

Working Your Way Back Home is a program that will go a long way toward getting displaced workers back so they, too, can contribute to our state’s recovery.

Dr. Parker, Tommy Dale, Melanie -- I want to thank you for again making Mississippi the lead state in the recovery and rebuilding process.

My other announcement involves a subject that is very special and appropriate today.

I am pleased to announce that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has approved our uses of federal funds for utility ratepayer mitigation and for assisting the state's insurance wind pool.

Collectively, this amounts to \$410 million in federal funds that will protect customers from the increased costs borne by utilities as they worked feverishly to restore service after Hurricane Katrina, and to keep the increase in Mississippi Windstorm Underwriting Association rates to an absolute minimum.

With those items of great news, let's officially open the doors to the Governor's Recovery Expo and get on with the job at hand.

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These sponsors contributed \$5,000 each for the Expo. We expect representatives to attend your press conference and it would be a nice gesture for you to recognize and thank them:

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